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REPORT
ON THE
SUBJECT OF SLAVERY,

PRESENTED TO THE
Presbyterian Church in the U. S.
SYNOD OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

AT THEIR
SESSIONS IN WINNSBOROUGH, NOVEMBER 6, 1851

ADOPTED BY THEM, AND PUBLISHED BY THEIR ORDER.

BY REV. J. H. THORNWELL, D. D.

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REPORT ON SLAVERY.

It will be remembered that at the Sessions of this Synod in Columbia, in 1847, a series of resolutions was presented, setting forth the relations of the Church to slavery, and the duties respectively of masters and servants. After some discussion, it was deemed advisable to appoint a committee to take the whole subject into consideration, and submit a report, somewhat in the form of a circular letter to all the Churches of Jesus Christ throughout the earth, explaining the position of Southern Christians, and vindicating their right to the confidence, love and fellowship of all who everywhere call upon the name of our common Master. The design of appointing this committee was not to increase, but to allay agitation. It was evident that a strong public sentiment, both in Europe and America, had been organized, and was daily growing in intensity, against institutions which we had inherited from our fathers, and against which we felt no call, either from religion or policy, to enter a protest. We felt it to be due to Christian charity to make an effort, however unsuccessfully, to disabuse the minds of brethren, with whom we were anxious to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace, of prejudices and misapprehensions which we were confident had misled them. Events have taken place since the appointment of the committee, which invest the subject with additional importance. At that time the greatest danger immediately apprehended was a partial alienation, perhaps an external schism, among those who were as one in a common faith. But now, more portentous calamities are dreaded. The determined zeal, with which a policy founded, for the most part, in the conviction that slavery is a sin, is pressed upon the Federal Legislature, justifies the gloomiest forebodings in relation to the integrity of the Union and the stability of our free institutions. The question has passed from the Church to the State; it is no longer a debate among Christian ministers and Christian men, as to the terms of communion and the rights of particular communities to the Christian name.

It is now a question as to the equality of the States which compose this great commonwealth of nations, and the obligation of the charter which binds them in federal alliance. The immense importance which, in this aspect, is given to the subject, has induced the chairman of your committee to present, upon his own responsibility, the following thoughts. He has been unable to consult the brethren who were appointed with him. And as he is deeply convinced that the position of the Southern, and perhaps, he may say, of the whole Presbyterian Church, in relation to slavery, is the only position which can save the country from disaster and the Church from schism, he is quickened by the double consideration of patriotism and religion to record opinions which, however hastily expressed, have been maturely weighed.

I. The relation of the Church to slavery cannot be definitely settled without an adequate apprehension of the nature and office of the Church itself. What, then, is the Church? It is not, as we fear too many are disposed to regard it, a moral institute of universal good, whose business it is to wage war upon every form of human ill, whether social, civil, political or moral, and to patronize every expedient which a romantic benevolence may suggest as likely to contribute to human comfort, or to mitigate the inconveniences of life. We freely grant, and sincerely rejoice in the truth, that the healthful operations of the Church, in its own appropriate sphere, re-act upon all the interests of man, and contribute to the progress and prosperity of society; but we are far from admitting either that it is the purpose of God, that, under the present dispensation of religion, all ill shall be banished from this sublunary state, and earth be converted into a paradise, or that the proper end of the Church is the direct promotion of universal good. It has no commission to construct society afresh, to adjust its elements in different proportions, to re-arrange the distribution of its classes, or to change the forms of its political constitutions. The noble schemes of philanthropy which have distinguished Christian nations; their magnificent foundations for the poor, the maimed and the blind; the efforts of the wise and good to mitigate human misery, and to temper justice with mercy in the penal visitations of the law; the various associations that have been formed to check and abate particular forms of evil, have all been quickened into life by the spirit of Christianity. But still it is not the distinctive province of the Church to build Asylums for the needy or insane; to organize

societies for the improvement of the penal code, or for arresting the progress of intemperance, gambling or lust. The problems which the anomalies of our fallen state are continually forcing on philanthropy, the Church has no right directly to solve. She must leave them to the Providence of God and to human wisdom, sanctified and guided by the spiritual influences which it is her glory to foster and cherish. The Church is a very peculiar society—voluntary in the sense that all its members become so, not by constraint, but willingly ; but not in the sense that its doctrines, discipline and order, are the creatures of human will, deriving their authority and obligation from the consent of its members. On the contrary, it has a fixed and unalterable constitution ; and that constitution is the word of God. It is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is enthroned in it as a sovereign. It can hear no voice but His ; obey no commands but His ; pursue no ends but His. Its officers are His servants, bound to execute only His will. Its doctrines are His teachings, which He, as a prophet, has given from God ; its discipline His law, which He as king has ordained. The power of the Church, accordingly, is only ministerial and declarative. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is her rule of faith and practice. She can announce what it teaches ; enjoin what it commands ; prohibit what it condemns, and enforce her testimonies by spiritual sanctions. Beyond the Bible she can never go, and apart from the Bible she can never speak. To the law and to the testimony, and to them alone, she must always appeal ; and when they are silent it her duty to put her hand upon her lips.

These principles, thus abstractly stated, are not likely to provoke opposition, but the conclusion which flows from them, and for the sake of which we have here stated them, has unfortunately been too much disregarded ; and that is, that the Church is not at liberty to *speculate*. She has a *creed*, but no *opinions*. When she speaks, it must be in the name of the Lord, and her only argument is, *thus it is written*.

In conformity with this principle, has the Church any authority to declare slavery to be sinful ? Or, in other words, has the Bible, anywhere, either directly or indirectly, condemned the relation of master and servant, as incompatible with the will of God ?

We think there can be little doubt, that if the Church had universally repressed the spirit of speculation, and had been content to stand by the naked testimony of God, we should have been spared

many of the most effective dissertations against slavery. Deduct the opposition to it which has arisen from sympathy with imaginary sufferings, from ignorance of its nature and misapplication of the crotchets of philosophers—deduct the opposition which is due to sentiment, romance or speculation, and how much will be found to have originated from the humble and devout study of the Scriptures? Will any man say that he who applies to them with an honest and unprejudiced mind, and discusses their teachings upon the subject, simply as a question of language and interpretation, will rise from the pages with the sentiments or spirit of a modern abolitionist? Certain it is that no direct condemnation of it can anywhere be found in the sacred volume. A social element in all states, from the dawn of history until the present period, if it be the crying and damning sin which its enemies represent it to be, it is truly amazing that the Bible, which professes to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work, no where gives the slightest caution against this tremendous evil. The master is no where rebuked as a monster of cruelty and tyranny—the slave no where exhibited as the object of peculiar compassion and sympathy. The manner in which the relation itself is spoken of and its duties prescribed, the whole tone and air of the sacred writers convey the impression that they themselves had not the least suspicion that they were dealing with a subject full of abominations and outrages. We read their language—cool, dispassioned, didactic. We find masters exhorted in the same connection with husbands, parents, magistrates; slaves exhorted in the same connection with wives, children and subjects. The Prophet or Apostle gives no note of alarm—raises no signal of distress when he comes to the slave and his master, and the unwary reader is in serious danger of concluding that according to the Bible, it is not much more harm to be a master than a father—a slave than a child. But this is not all. The Scriptures not only fail to condemn—they as distinctly sanction slavery as any other social condition of man. The Church was organized in the family of a slaveholder; it was divinely regulated among the chosen people of God, and the peculiar duties of the parties are inculcated under the Christian economy. These are facts which cannot be denied. Our argument then is this: If the Church is bound to abide by the authority of the Bible, and that alone, she discharges her whole office in regard to slavery, when she declares what the

Bible teaches, and enforces its laws by her own peculiar sanctions. Where the Scriptures are silent, she must be silent too. What the Scriptures have not made essential to a Christian profession, she does not undertake to make so. What the Scriptures have sanctioned, she does not condemn. To this course she is shut up by the nature of her constitution. If she had universally complied with the provisions of her charter, the angry discussions which have disgraced her courts and produced bitterness and alienation among her own children, in different countries, and in different sections of the same land, would all have been prevented. The abolition excitement derives most of its fury, and all its power, from the conviction which Christian people, without warrant from God, have industriously propagated, that slavery, essentially considered, is a sin. They have armed the instincts of our moral nature against it. They have given the dignity of principle to the clamours of fanaticism; and the consequence is that many Churches are distracted and the country reeling under a series of assaults in which treachery to man is justified as obedience to God. According to the rule of faith which gives to the Church its being, the relation of master and slave stands on the same foot with the other relations of life. In itself considered, it is not inconsistent with the will of God—it is *not* sinful. This is as much a doctrine of Christianity as the obligation of obedience to law. The Church, therefore, cannot undertake to disturb the relation. The Bible further teaches that there are duties growing out of this relation—duties of the master and duties of the slave. The Church must enforce these duties upon her own members. Here her jurisdiction stops. As a *Church*—as the visible Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—she must venture to interfere no further, unless it be to repress the agitation of those who assume to be wiser and purer than the word of God. Those who corrupt the Scriptures, who profanely add to the duties of the Decalogue, are no more entitled to exemption from ecclesiastical discipline than any other disturbers of the peace or fomenters of faction and discord. It is not a question whether masters can be received into the communion of the saints, but it is a question whether those who exclude them should not themselves be rejected. We are far from insinuating that abolitionists, *as such*, are unfit to be members of the Church. Slavery may evidently be contemplated in various aspects—as a social arrangement, involving a distinction of classes, like oriental caste, or European grada-

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tion of ranks—as a civil relation, involving rights, obligations corresponding to its own nature—as a political condition, bearing upon the prosperity, happiness and growth of communities. In any or in all these aspects, it may be opposed upon considerations of policy and prudence, as the despotism of Asia, the aristocracy of Europe, or the free institutions of America are opposed, without the imputation of sin upon the nature of the relation itself. The members of the Church, as citizens and as men, have the same right to judge of the expediency or in expediency of introducing and perpetuating in their own soil this institution, as any other element of their social economy. But they transcend their sphere, and bring reproach upon the Scriptures as a rule of faith, when they go beyond these political considerations, and condemn slavery as essentially repugnant to the will of God. They then corrupt the Scriptures, and are exposed to the malediction of those who trifle with the Divine Testimony. The Southern Churches have never asked their brethren in Europe, or in the non-slaveholding sections of their own land, to introduce slavery among them—they have never asked them to approve it as the wisest and best constitution of society. All they have demanded is, that their brethren would leave it where God has left it, and deal with it, where it is found, as God has dealt with it. We insist upon it that they should not disturb the tranquility of the State by attempting to re-adjust our social fabrick according to their own crotchets, when we ourselves, the only parties who have a right to meddle, are satisfied with our condition. We do not recognize them as political apostles, to whom God has transferred from us the right inherent in every other people, to manage their affairs in their own way, so long as they keep within the limits of the Divine Law. If we fail in our social and political organizations—if, by consequence, we lag behind in the progress of nations, we do not forfeit our right to self-government and become the minors and wards of wiser and stronger States. It is as preposterous in our Northern and European brethren to undertake to force their system upon us, or to break up our own in obedience to their notions, as it would be in us to wage a war upon theirs, on the ground that ours is better. Slavery, as a *political* question, is one in regard to which communities and States may honestly differ. But as a *moral* question, the Bible has settled it; and all we contend for is, that being a *matter* of liberty, we should not break fellowship for difference upon other grounds. If any man,

however, is not content to stand by the word of God—if any Church will not tolerate the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free—that man and that Church cannot be vindicated from the charge of fomenting schism. They become justly exposed to censure. He who would debar a slaveholder from the table of the Lord, upon the simple and naked ground that he is a slaveholder, deserves himself to be excluded for usurping the prerogatives of Christ and introducing terms of communion which cast reproach upon the conduct of Jesus and the Apostles. He violates the very charter of the Church—is a traitor to its fundamental law.

We have been struck with three circumstances in the conduct of what may be called the Christian argument against slavery. The first is, that the principles from which, for the most part, the conclusion has been drawn, were the abstrusest of all speculations upon the vexed question of human rights, and not the obvious teachings of the Scriptures. The second is, that when the argument has been professedly taken from the Bible, it has consisted in strained applications of passages, or forced inferences from doctrines, in open violation of the law that Scripture is its own interpreter; and the third is, that duties which the Bible enjoins are not only inadequately recognized, but forced into a system of morals whose fundamental principles exclude them.

The argument from philosophy, if the dogmas of sophists upon the nature and extent of human rights can be dignified with the title of philosophy, a Church Court cannot admit to be authoritative, without doing violence to her own constitution. It is not denied that truth is truth, whether found in the Bible or out of it, and it is not denied that there is much truth, and truth of a most important kind, which it is not the province of revelation to teach. But then it should be remembered that this is truth with which the Church, *as such*, has nothing to do. Neither should it be forgotten, that if human speculation conducts to a moral result directly contradictory of the Scriptures, faith convicts it of falsehood, the word of God being a surer guide than the wit of man. When the question is whether man is mistaken or the word of God deceitful, the answer to the Church cannot be doubtful. And yet how much of the declamation against slavery, in which Christian people are prone to indulge, is founded upon principles utterly unsupported by the Scriptures? One man very complacently tells us that every man is entitled to the fruit of his own labour; and that the master, in appro-

priating that of the slave, defrauds him of his right. It is then denounced as a system of robbery and plunder, which every good man should labour to banish from the earth. But where is the maxim, in the sense in which it is interpreted, to be found in the Scriptures? Where, even in any respectable system of moral philosophy? Where are we taught that the labour which a man puts forth in his own person is always his, or belongs to him of right, and cannot belong to another? How does it appear that what is physically his, must be legally his? Another insists on the absolute equality of the species, and can find no arrangement in harmony with reason, but that which shall reduce the race to a stagnant uniformity of condition. But where do the Scriptures teach that an essential equality as men implies a corresponding equality of state? And who is authorized to limit the application of this sweeping principle to the sole relation of slavery? It is as much the weapon of the socialist and leveller as of the abolitionist, and the Church cannot accept it without renouncing the supremacy of the Scriptures; neither can she proceed, upon it, to excommunicate the slaveholder, without fulminating her anathemas against the rich and the noble. Another insists upon the essential and indestructible personality of men, and vituperates slavery as reducing human beings to the condition of chattels and of things, as if it were possible that human legislation could convert matter into mind or mind into matter, or as if slavery were not professedly a relation of man to man. The arguments from this and all similar grounds can be easily answered. It will be found, in every case, either that the principle assumed is false in itself or distorted in its application, or that the whole discussion proceeds on a gratuitous hypothesis in regard to the nature of slavery. But whether they can be answered or not, no deductions of man can set aside the authority of God. The Bible is supreme, and as long as it allows the institution, the Church should not dare to rebuke it. In a court of Jesus Christ we would not think of presenting any consideration as conclusive, but thus saith the Lord.

But when the argument is professedly conducted from the Bible, it is in violation of the great principle that Scripture is its own interpreter. It is notorious—it is indeed universally conceded, that no express condemnations of slavery have ever been produced from the sacred volume. The plan is, in the absence of any thing precise and definite, to demonstrate an incongruity betwixt the analogy

and general spirit of the Bible, and the facts of slavery. Some general principle is siezed upon, such as the maxim of universal benevolence, or of doing unto others as we would have them do unto us, and brought into contrast with the degradation or abuses of bondage. Or specific precepts, such as this in relation to the family, are singled out, with which it is supposed slavery renders it impossible to comply. The fallacy in these cases is easily detected. The same line of argument, carried out precisely in the same way, would make havoc with all the institutions of civilized society. Indeed, it would be harder to defend from the Scriptures the righteousness of great possessions than the righteousness of slavery. The same principle which would make the master emancipate his servant, on the ground of benevolence, would make the rich man share his estates with his poor neighbours; and he who would condemn the institution as essentially and inherently evil, because it sometimes incidentally involves the disruption of family ties, would condemn the whole texture of society in the non-slaveholding States, where the separation of parents and children, of husbands and wives, is often a matter of stern necessity. But however the argument might be answered, it is enough for a Christian man, who compares Scripture with Scripture, to know that slavery is expressly excepted from the application of this or any other principle in the sweeping sense of the abolitionists. It is not a case left to the determination of general principles—it is provided for in the law. If the Scriptures were silent in regard to it, we might appeal to analogies to aid us in reaching the will of God; but as they have mentioned the subject again and again, and stated the principles which are to be applied to it, we are shut up to these special testimonies.

Those who have been conversant with works against slavery, cannot have failed to be struck with the awkward and incongruous appearance which in these works the commands of the Scriptures to masters and servants assume. They lay down principles which make slavery an utter abomination—treason to man and rebellion against God. They represent it as an enormous system of cruelty, tyranny and impiety. They make it a fundamental duty to labour for its extirpation, and yet will not venture directly and boldly, at least Christian abolitionists, to counsel insurrection or murder; they will even repeat the commands of the Bible, as if in mockery of all their speculations. Now we ask if these commands are not forced

appendages to their moral system? Are they not awkwardly inserted? The moral system of abolitionists does not legitimately admit them; and if they were not restrained by respect for the Bible from carrying out their own doctrines, they would find themselves forced to recommend measures to the slave very different from obedience to his master. Those, accordingly, who prefer consistency to piety, have not scrupled to reject these precepts, and to denounce the book which enjoins them. They feel the incongruity betwixt their doctrines and these duties, and they do not hesitate to revile the Scriptures as the patron of tyranny and bondage. Admit the principle that slavery, essentially considered, is not a sin, and the injunctions of Scripture are plain, consistent, intelligible; deny the principle, and the Bible seems to be made up of riddles.

Such is a general view of the christian argument against slavery. We are not conscious of having done it any injustice. We have endeavored to study it impartially and candidly; but we confess that the conviction grows upon us, that those who most violently denounce this relation, have formed their opinions in the first instance independently of the Bible, and then by special pleading have endeavoured to pervert its teachings to the patronage of their assumptions. They strike us much more as apologists for the defects and omissions of the Scriptures, than as humble inquirers, sitting at the feet of Jesus to learn His will. They have settled it in their own minds that slavery is a sin; then the Bible must condemn it, and they set to work to make out the case that the Bible has covertly and indirectly done what they feel it ought to have done. Hence those peculiar features of the argument to which we have already adverted.

To this may be added a total misapprehension of the nature of the institution. Adjuncts and concomitants of slavery are confounded with its essence, and abuses are seized upon as characteristic of the very genius of the institution.

If this method of argument is to be persisted in, the consequences must ultimately be injurious to the authority of the sacred writers. Those who have not a point to gain, will easily detect the sophistry which makes the Scriptures subsidiary to abolitionism; and if they are to receive it as a fundamental principle of morals that there can be no right to the labour of another, independently of contract, and this is the essence of slavery, they will be shut up to the necessity of denying the sufficiency and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures.

Like Morell, they will take their stand upon the defective morality of the Bible, and scout the idea of any external, authoritative rule of faith. The very same spirit of rationalism which has made the Prophets and Apostles succumb to philosophy and impulse in relation to the doctrines of salvation, lies at the foundation of modern speculation in relation to the rights of man. Opposition to slavery has never been the offspring of the Bible. It has sprung from visionary theories of human nature and society—it has sprung from the misguided reason of man—it comes as natural, not as revealed truth; and when it is seen that the word of God stands in the way of it, the lively oracles will be stripped of their authority, and reduced to the level of mere human utterances. We affectionately warn our brethren of the mischiefs that must follow from their mode of conducting the argument against us—they are not only striking at slavery, but they are striking at the foundation of our common faith. They are helping the cause of rationalism. We need not repeat that a sound philosophy must ever coincide with revelation, but what we insist upon is that in cases of conflict, the Scriptures must be supreme. Man may err, but God can never lie. If men are at liberty from their own heads to frame systems of morality, which render null and void the commandments of God, we see not why they are not equally at liberty to frame systems of doctrines which render vain the covenant of grace. If they are absolutely their own law, why not absolutely their own teachers? It is, therefore, a very grave question which *they* have to decide, who, in opposition to the example of the Apostles of our Lord, exclude masters from the communion of the saints, and from the hopes of the Gospel.

The history of the world is full of illustrations that the foolishness of God is wiser than man. There is a noble moderation in the Scriptures, upon which alone depends the stability of States and the prosperity and success of the whole social economy. It rebukes alike the indifference and torpor which would repress the spirit of improvement and stiffen society into a fixed and lifeless condition, and the spirit of impatience and innovation which despises the lessons of experience and rushes into visionary schemes of reformation. It is in the healthful operation of all the limbs and members of the body politic that true progress consists; and he who fancies that deformities can be cured by violent and hasty amputations, may find that in removing what seemed to be only ex-

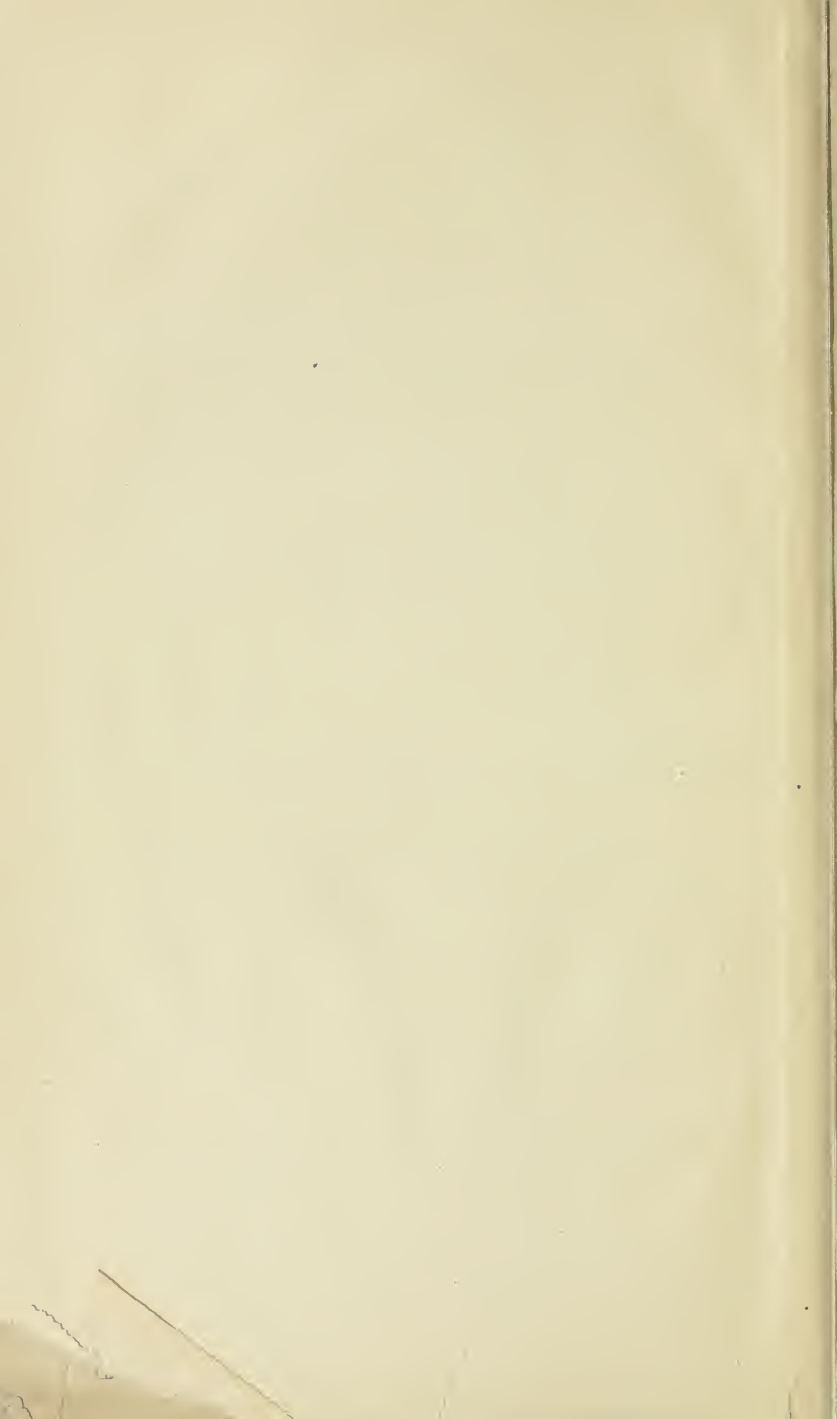
crecences, he is inflicting a fatal stroke upon vital organs of the system. Slavery, to those who are unaccustomed to its operations, may seem to be an unnatural and monstrous condition, but it will be found that no principles can be pleaded to justify its removal which may not be applied with fatal success to the dearest interests of man. They who join in the unhallowed crusade against the institutions of the South, will have reason to repent that they have set an engine in motion which cannot be arrested until it has crushed and ground to powder the safeguards of life and property among themselves.

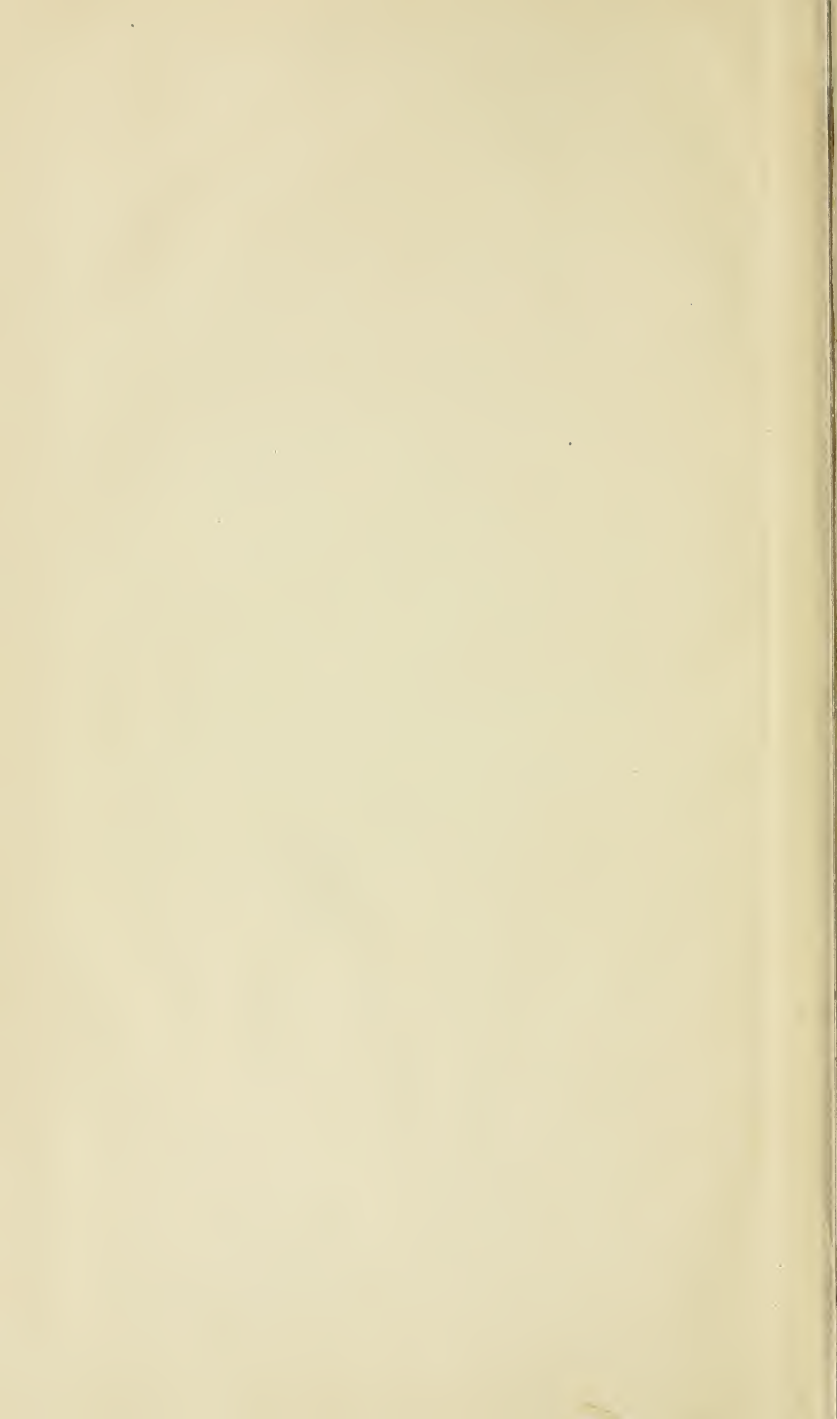
Deeply convinced as we are that the proper position of the Church relation to slavery is that which we have endeavoured to present in these pages, we would earnestly and solemnly expostulate with those denominations at the North who have united in the outcry against us, and urge them to reconsider their steps in the fear of God and under the guidance of His word. We ask them to take the Apostles as their guide. We are solemn and earnest, not only because we deplore a schism in the body of Christ, but because we deplore a schism among the confederated States of this Union. We know what we say when we declare our deliberate conviction that the continued agitation of slavery must sooner or later shiver this government into atoms; and agitated it must continue to be, unless the Churches of Jesus Christ take their stand firmly and immovably upon the platform of the Bible. The people of the South ask nothing more—they will be content with nothing less. Let the Churches take this position, and the people of the North will find their moral instincts rallying to the support of our Federal Constitution, and will give to the winds a policy founded on the profane insinuation that slavery is essentially a sin. Free-soilism is nothing but the application to politics of this unscriptural dogma. If slavery be indeed consistent with the Bible, their responsibility is *tremendous*, who, in obedience to blind impulses and visionary theories, pull down the fairest fabric of government the world has ever seen, rend the body of Christ in sunder, and dethrone the Saviour in His own Kingdom. What a position for Churches of Jesus Christ—aiding and abetting on the one hand the restless and turbulent designs of agitators, demagogues and radical reformers, and giving countenance on the other to a principle which, if legitimately carried out, robs the Scriptures of their supremacy, and delivers us over to the folly and madness of rationalism. Are our country, our

Bible, our interests on earth and our hopes for heaven, to be sacrificed on the altars of a fierce fanaticism? Are laws to be made which God never enacted—doctrines to be taught which the Apostles have condemned, and are they to be propagated and forced on men at the peril of every thing that is dear and precious? We conjure our brethren—for such we shall still call them—we conjure our brethren to pause. We do not ask them to patronize slavery—we do not wish them to change their own institutions—we only ask them to treat us as the Apostles treated the slaveholders of their day, and leave to us the liberty which we accord to them, of conducting our affairs according to our own convictions of truth and duty. We ask it of them as Christians—as professed followers of Christ; and if this reasonable demand is refused, upon them and not upon us must rest the perilous responsibility of the disasters that must inevitably follow. We are not alarmists, but slavery is implicated in every fibre of Southern society; it is with us a vital question, and it is because we *know* that interference with it cannot and will not be much longer endured, we raise our warning voice. We would save the country if we could. We would save the Constitution which our fathers framed, and we would have our children and our children's children, for countless generations, worship in the temple which our fathers reared. But this cannot be, unless our whole people shall be brought to feel that slavery is no ground of discord, and that in Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free. Would to God that this blessed consummation could be reached!


In the mean time Christian masters at the South should address themselves with earnestness and vigor to the discharge of their solemn duties to their slaves. We would stir up their minds, not that they have been inattentive to the subject, but that they may take the more diligent heed. The most important and commanding of all their obligations is that which relates to religious instruction. Food and raiment and shelter their interests will prompt them to provide; but as the labour of the slave is expended for their benefit, they are bound, by the double consideration of justice and of mercy, to care for his soul. We rejoice that so much has already been done in imparting the gospel to this class; and we hope that the time is not far distant when every Christian master will feel that he is somewhat in the same sense responsible for the religious education of his slaves as for the religious education of his children. The Church, too, as an organized society, should give special atten-

tion to the subject. There are many questions connected with it, which ought to be gravely and deliberately considered. We have no doubt that much effort has been uselessly expended, because injudiciously applied. Of one thing we are satisfied—their religious teachers should never be taken from among themselves. There is too great a proneness to superstition and extravagance among the most enlightened of them, to entrust them with the cure of souls. Their circumstances preclude them from the preparation and study which such a charge involves. There was wisdom in the statute of the primitive Church, which allowed none but a freeman to be a minister of the gospel. To say nothing of the fact that their time is under the direction of their masters, we would as soon think of making ministers and elders, and organizing Churches of children, as of according the same privilege to slaves. They would soon degrade piety into fanaticism, and the Church into bedlam. We rejoice that the Presbyteries of our own Synod have uniformly acted in conformity with this principle; and although our success may, by consequence, be slow, it will eventually be sure.





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